

Capitol Hill School  
(Fourth Ward School)  
602 Washington Street  
Marshall  
Calhoun County  
Michigan

HABS No. MI-227

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CAPITOL HILL SCHOOL  
(Fourth Ward School)

HABS No. MI-227

Location: 602 Washington Street  
Marshall, Calhoun County, Michigan

Present Owner: Marshall Public Schools

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Storage

Significance: A mid-19th century, two-room schoolhouse of distinctly vernacular Gothic Revival character.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1860
2. Architect: Sheldon Smith
3. Original & subsequent owners: Marshall Public Schools has been the sole owner.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: E.O. Crittenton was the superintendent of construction.
5. Original plans and construction: None available.
6. Alterations & additions: Early in the twentieth century, a small addition was added to the east side to accommodate indoor plumbing. The original ornate cupola was removed during the roofing job and never replaced. Also removed were the board sidewalk and the picket fence which enclosed the grounds. At some relatively modern time, an addition was made, extending the mass of the eastern vestibule. This wing is about two feet lower than the vestibule and is gable roofed; the verge boards appear to have been taken off the original gable and moved to the new one. This addition, constructed with a concrete foundation and brick walls, houses toilets.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an interesting representative of a small school building type in the mid-19th century, which is virtually in its original state.

2. Condition of fabric: The basic structure appears sound but the finishes and some wood detail need repair. The building is now used only for storage.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The main portion is 27'-2" x 42'-4"; a projection on each end is 7'-0" x 14'-8". The front faces north.
2. Foundations: The foundation walls are 1'-9" above grade, constructed of Marshall sandstone ashlar. A plain stucco water table has been added, probably during the present century, and stone joints repointed.
3. Walls: Exterior walls are load-bearing and of brick laid on common bond (i.e., headers every fifth course). Bricks are quite uniform in size and laying, are moderately soft, and dull red in color. They have been painted over but the paint has flaked off in places.

The walls show some minor cracking.

4. Structural system: Along the transverse axis of the building is a rubble wall extending four feet below the floor line. This, and the outer foundation walls, support 2" x 10" sawn floor joists extending parallel to the facade. There is one row of solid bridging on each span.

The partition between classrooms is frame.

Roof rafters are sheathed with wide boards.

5. Stoops, bulkheads: Modern concrete steps now approach each of the four entrances, leaving no indication of original steps, which may have been wooden.

A relatively modern bulkhead and stair on the rear (south) side give access to a partially excavated heating and coal storage area.

6. Chimneys: There are remains of two original corbelled chimneys, one on the west wall of the front classroom and one on the east wall of the rear classroom. The latter has been altered into a full chimney extending to the basement, with a modern portion above the roof. The former does not now extend above the roof. An old undated photograph in possession of the Marshall Historical Society shows four chimneys on the exterior, with corbelled cornices and paneled brickwork. Apparently two were provided for a symmetrical effect.

7. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: There are four identical entrances, located on the front and rear walls of the two vestibules. Each is a simple masonry opening with a segmental brick arch at the head, which comprises part of a plain brick label. Doors are of a five-panel design with two vertical lower panels, a horizontal panel just below knob height, and two tall vertical panels above. Simple mouldings are integral with the rails and stiles. Each panel has a slightly raised field on each face. No original hardware remains. Inside the masonry opening is a plain wood casing.
- b. Windows: The front and rear facades each have a triple window on axis, filling a slightly projecting pavilion. The central opening has a pointed (two-centered) arch, while the two alongside it have rectangular heads (flat brick arch). It is treated with a plain brick label. The mullions are brick. Sills are stone, two brick courses high. On each side of the main part of the building, near the corner, is a square-headed window with brick label and stone sill. A double window is centered on the west wall of the vestibule. The openings are treated like the other rectangular ones.

The east wall of the vestibule shows traces of a similar pair of windows, filled up when an addition was made at the end. The north and south gables each contain a round window with brick trim.

All windows are at present boarded up on the outside and some panes are broken. Sash are double-hung, four lights over four lights, and two-over-two in the narrow openings. The pointed windows have "Gothic sash" in the upper half. There is no indication of shutters.

8. Roof: The central portion of the building is covered by a hip roof, which is intersected axially by four gables. It is presently covered with composition shingles, laid over older wood shingles.

There is a wooden cornice, which is bracketed except at the gables, and a rather wide soffit without bed mouldings. The cornice consists of corona, fillet, ovolo, a wide cyma reversa, and a fascia. On each gable are verge boards pierced with tracery ornament (triangular trefoils). The lower third of the gables is curved to flare and the verge boards and soffits conform to this curvature.

There are no dormers. No cupola remains, but an old undated photograph in possession of the Marshall Historical Society shows one located at the center of the roof. It is slender, square in plan, and in the form of a Gothic pinnacle with a pointed trefoil arch on each side.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: There is a front and a rear classroom which are equal and symmetrical. Each has a door on each side near the interior partition between them, giving access to the vestibules.
2. Flooring: There is a sub-floor made of 5-1/4" boards, which may have been the original finish floor. The present finish floor is of 2-1/4" maple boards.
3. Wall finish: Walls are plastered on the masonry. The partition between classrooms is plastered on wood lath.
4. Ceiling finish: Ceilings are plastered on wood lath.
5. Plaster surfaces: Walls and ceilings have been painted but the paint is now considerably deteriorated.
6. Doorways and doors: There are two doorways in each classroom, with five-panel doors similar to the entrances, trimmed with a wooden architrave. Window architraves are similar.
7. Trim: The classrooms have a simple wood base and a wainscot of vertical boards. Three walls are equipped with slate blackboards and wooden chalk rails, though they are probably not original.
8. Hardware: The doors have been rehung and fitted with replacement locks and knobs. It is uncertain whether the present butts are original or replacements, of which there are three on each interior door.

There are cast-iron floor registers, perhaps dating from c. 1900.

9. Lighting: There is no indication of original fixtures.
10. Heating: Apparently this building was originally heated by stoves. At some time a gravity warm air furnace was installed.

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D. Site:

This building occupies a rectangular area at the southeast corner of Washington and Maple Streets. It faces north toward Washington Street. Modern concrete walks lead to the front entrances. There is no sign of formal landscaping or accessory buildings.

Prepared by: Harley J. McKee, Architect, NPS  
Date of Visit: July 9, 1965

Edited by: Jack Barker, Jr.  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
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